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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000567

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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: IMPLEMENTING THE MAY 29 AGREEMENT
BETWEEN VMRO AND DUI

REF: A. SKOPJE 533
[1](#)B. SKOPJE 418

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Implementation of the May 29 agreement between governing VMRO-DPMNE and opposition DUI (reftels) began July 9 with the first meeting of separate working groups on a draft law on the use of languages, and on a package of social benefits for victims of the 2001 conflict. Consistent USG pressure on the government over the past several weeks, and close coordination between the Embassy and the EUSR to forge a common position on implementation, helped overcome stiff resistance and convince the Prime Minister to respect his commitments under the agreement. Both parties now must work to bridge their substantive differences over the issues under discussion, and will then need to lobby other parties in the parliament to gain the support needed to pass whatever draft proposals emerge from the working groups. End summary.

May 29 Agreement Implementation Begins...

[1](#)2. (SBU) Following USNATO Ambassador Nuland's June 29 meeting with PM Gruevski on the margins of the NATO EAPC Forum (ref A), Ambassador Milovanovic met with the Prime Minister on July 5 and pressed him to honor the May 29 agreement he concluded with DUI's Ali Ahmeti and to make good on his pledge to Nuland to implement the May 29 agreement (ref B). Gruevski's initial insistence on attempting to disregard the agreement by convening multi-party working groups (WGs) on a draft law on the use of languages, and on a social compensation package for victims of the 2001 conflict, finally gave way to the Ambassador's argument that the WGs initially should be comprised solely of VMRO and DUI, as the parties to the May 29 agreement, with other parties eventually being invited to participate once the process was up and running. (COMMENT: FM Milososoki's meeting with the Secretary, which had been scheduled for July 10, probably

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helped drive the timing of Gruevski's decision to show more flexibility regarding the composition of the WGs, which met late the evening of the preceding day. END COMMENT.)

[1](#)3. (SBU) Both WGs met at the Parliament the evening of July [1](#)9. An EUSR representative monitored the WG on social

compensation for the victims of conflict, and a US Embassy representative monitored the language law WG. VMRO participants in the WGs included the Minister of Interior and a Deputy Prime Minister, while DUI was represented by party notables and the DUI mayor of the Skopje suburb of Cair. PM Gruevski's Chief of Staff also observed the WG proceedings.

...Way Ahead

14. (SBU) A VMRO representative opened the WG meeting on the language law with an update on the status of implementation of the first two points of the May 29 agreement (incorporation into the parliamentary rulebook of a list of 46 laws requiring double majority voting, and reconstitution of the parliament's Committee on Inter-ethnic Relations, both key DUI demands). He reported that VMRO expected both issues to be resolved in the coming two weeks. DUI representatives responded positively to those steps, but noted the need to focus on the substantive issues under consideration in the WGs.

15. (SBU) After discussing next steps, the participants agreed to convene WG meetings over the next several weeks to deal with substantive matters. They agreed on the composition of the WGs and on the venues for future meetings. The language law WG members agreed to review each other's drafts of a law on the use of languages, and to discuss the drafts at the next WG meeting, scheduled for July 19. The discussions were cordial and positive, with both sides searching for a pragmatic approach to keeping the process moving forward.

Comment

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16. (SBU) The convening of the first meeting of the WGs is a positive first step, but only a first step, in implementing the May 29 agreement. Both parties now must work to bridge their substantive differences over the issues under discussion, should keep their respective coalition partners informed of developments, and will then need to lobby other parties in the parliament to gain the support needed to pass whatever draft proposals emerge from the working groups. That the meetings were held was due largely to the consistent USG and EUSR message on the need to include just VMRO and DUI in the initial discussions, and to only broaden membership in the WGs to include other parties once sufficient progress was made in the VMRO-DUI political dialogue to build confidence between the two sides. The outcome also reflects the close coordination between the Embassy and the EUSR office, which persuaded PM Gruevski that he had to take steps to begin implementing the agreement in order to demonstrate progress in fulfilling the political criteria necessary for Macedonia's NATO and EU membership goals.

MILOVANOVIC